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RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC  
RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHDC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000270

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ELTN](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [EINV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN LAGOS SLOW-GOING, BUT  
MOVING FORWARD

Ref: A) Lagos 169

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The Lagos State Government (LASG) is attacking head-on go-slows (traffic jams) that hinder the Lagos mega-city's development plan. Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA) is implementing its Transportation Master Plan, consisting of water ferries, light rail, and bus rapid transit systems linked by inter-modal interchanges. The State is rehabilitating major roadways via public private partnerships with international construction firms. A recently inaugurated Bus Rapid Transit System will incorporate bus systems run by transportation union members who otherwise might lose jobs. Water ferry jetties are under construction and light rail right-of-ways have been assigned, but there is much to be done before the system is reliable enough to coax Lagosians out of their cars. END SUMMARY.

"Go-Slows": the Current State of Transit  
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¶2. (U) Lagosians have several primary modes of transportation: private vehicles, okadas (motorcycle taxis), taxis, and molues and danfos (private minibuses providing passenger service). Pedestrians are everywhere, and congested roads and lack of sidewalks make travel difficult. In Lagos, traveling in a car is as much about making a strong business impression as it is about making a fashion statement. As the number of Lagosians with disposable income has increased, so has the number of private cars. Molues, danfos, and okadas have also multiplied in recent years, resulting in the infamous Lagos go-slows that can last hours and span miles of roadway. Traffic jams, unruly drivers, a lack of traffic enforcement, poor quality roads, and street hawkers all contribute to the problem.

Transportation Master Plan: Link Bus, Ferry, Rail  
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¶3. (U) In 2003, Lagos State Government (LASG) created Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA), a World Bank-assisted government agency to plan, design, and implement a Master Transit Plan. In a meeting with EconOffs on May 16, Jide Oduyoye, Deputy Director of Road Safety and Enforcement, said that early in 2008, after several years of studies LAMATA, unveiled a comprehensive master plan including new water ferries, light rail lines, and bus rapid transit lines. The plan identifies 28 activity centers which serve as interchange points between the various modes. The goal is to create an integrated multi-modal system that will minimize transfer time and provide a safe and effective transportation system. In addition to the new modes, LAMATA is also trying to rehabilitate existing roads and improve traffic flow. All rehabilitation, Oduyoye said, is being completed with long term planning in mind, specifically so that intelligent transportation systems such as timed lights and electronic bus stop notifications can ultimately be used. LAMATA plans to encourage public transit use through a series of public relations campaigns and community

dialogues.

#### Roads: Rehab Eases Drivers' Woes

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14. (U) LAMATA has recently begun renovations of major state owned roads throughout Lagos. These rehabilitations have been completed through public-private partnerships that LASG has entered into with several international construction firms, such as Julius Berger. Although EconOffs' ability to monitor this progress in the greater Lagos area is limited, ConGen Lagos has noticed vast traffic flow and road quality improvements on Ikoyi and Victoria Islands. ConGen Offs and ConGen drivers also applauded the State's completion of the rehabilitation on a long stretch of Ozumba Mbadiwe Road, popularly called "the Lekki Expressway", which widened the right of way to add lanes, leveled and repaved the road, repainted the lines, created turn lanes, added a drainage system, and built a concrete median to prevent illegal left and u-turns. The only road connecting Victoria Island with Lekki Peninsula, Ozumba Mbadiwe handles a large volume of traffic daily. The rehabilitation has noticeably reduced wait times from a couple of hours, on average, to less than one hour for travel to frequently visited offices of international oil companies and other ConGen contacts. Other major road rehabilitations include Bourdillion and Girard Roads in Ikoyi. Even with these improvements, traffic jams occur, and the average commute time from place-to-place can still exceed two hours. In most cases, road rehabilitation projects have taken months, causing road closures, often during peak traffic hours.

#### Bus Rapid Transit Includes Union-Owned Fleet

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15. (U) LAMATA launched its first Bus Rapid Transit line (BRT) in March 2008. One hundred days after its launch, LAMATA's Managing Director Dayo Mobereola was quoted in the news media as estimating that the BRT system serviced a total passenger movement of 9.7 million, and the daily passenger load increased from around 15,000 to 140,000 people. Public response to the line has been positive overall, and a performance assessment of the BRT is in the pipeline, Oduyoye said. To assure the local bus driver unions, LAMATA designed the BRT so that local unions could incorporate as businesses and purchase and run buses on the line. These buses are all being financed through local banks, and provide employment to union drivers who might otherwise be out of a job as BRT riders switch from molues and danfos to BRT buses.

16. (U) However, BRT faces capacity and pricing issues. LAMATA added 70 buses to its initial 120 bus fleet one month after its launch, and plans to deploy 200 additional buses to handle the volume of demand. Despite these increases, long lines remain at BRT stops, and passengers experience long waits for buses. In early June commuters protested a sudden increase in BRT fares, intended as a price recalibration, from 50 naira for short distances to a flat rate of 100 naira per trip; the protests quickly resulted in the termination of the fare hike. Passengers also complained of buses not running on schedule. Also BRT does not run on Ikoyi and Victoria Islands so once there, passengers commuting in from the mainland have to find other modes of transport.

#### Water Ferry Systems: Jetties under Construction

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17. (U) LAMATA has begun work on five water ferry jetties and recently received rights-of-way for routes for a system of water ferries. These routes will connect the new jetties on the mainland with points on Ikoyi and Lagos Islands in an effort to reduce the number of cars commuting to the islands each day. However, the effectiveness of the ferries, like other elements of the system, will depend on the efficiency of the interchanges at the jetties; if there are no buses or other modes of transport waiting for passengers to bring them close to their final destinations, most commuters may continue to drive.

#### Light Rail to Use NRC Right-of-Way

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¶18. (U) A recently signed MOU with the National Rail Corporation will allow LAMATA to construct new light rail lines in the existing rights-of-way of existing heavy rail tracks. Although there are plans to create a large network of light rail lines, LAMATA is trying to move forward with two specific lines, the Red and Blue Lines, to connect Marina on Lagos Island with greater Lagos.

Developers Ignore Master Plan  
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¶19. (SBU) Oduyoye expressed frustration with developers of Victoria Island's Eko Atlantic City and Lekki Free Trade Zone (LFTZ), commercial and mix-used industrial zones currently under construction, for their failure to consult with LAMATA or to take the Master Transit Plan into account in planning their projects. The 820 hectare Eko Atlantic City, planned for Victoria Island, and the Lekki Free Trade Zone, whose published plans call for new arterial and coastal roads, were never vetted with LAMATA, Oduyoye said.

¶10. Comment: Rational growth of the Lagos mega-city and improved quality of life for Lagosians, many of whom spend up to five hours commuting daily, depend on the Lagos State Government's ability to implement the Transit Master Plan. Beyond merely setting up the system, the State must deal with sometimes conflicting Federal-State authority, lack of enforcement of existing regulations, and lack of relevant expertise among even the most well-intentioned Lagos civil servants. Lagos will have to make sure that the buses, ferries, and trains run on time in order to coax Lagosians out of their cars and keep traffic flowing. End Comment.

¶11. (U) This cable was cleared with Embassy Abuja.

HUDSON